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Mediating Conflicting Values in a Community Archives Setting

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Abstract

Mediating Conflicting Values in a Community Archives Setting

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This report examines conflicts within the user community of the online fanwork repository Archive of Our Own (AO3). The site is a nonprofit venture with the ambitious goal of serving the large heterogeneous community of fandom writ large. Tensions among subsets of the Archive's user group have flared up at various points in its ten-year history, forcing its volunteer-based staff into the position of arbiter of community values. These conflicting values have influenced, sometimes asymmetrically, the functionality of the Archive and are now embedded in its design. Focusing on tensions in three broad categories delineated by the user groups in conflict, this report explores the effect the compromises have had on AO3's goals of inclusivity, preservation, and access.

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Introduction

Contemporary fan culture is widely held to have begun in the late 1960s and early 1970s with communities created around fans of the original *Star Trek* TV series (Busse 2009). In the beginning the predominantly female fanbase created a community around the independent publication and exchange of physical fan magazines, or fanzines, containing transformative fiction and visual art based on the source material. As mainstream entertainment media saturated different communities, fanworks expanded to include videos and even interactive fiction such as fan-made games. New media technology, such as the Internet and later Web 2.0 social media features, also meant fan activity could be shared with increasingly wider audiences. While the physical records of fandom – especially early fandom – continued to be preserved in personal collections and began to make their way into institutional archives,¹ online fan creations were vulnerable to the complaints of copyright holders and the changing policies of host sites.

In response to these tensions, the nonprofit Organization for Transformative Works (OTW) was created in 2007 with a mission of “providing access to and preserving the history of fanworks and fan culture” (Organization for Transformative Works, n.d.-b). It pursues this mission through projects which include legal advocacy, the community history wiki Fanlore (<https://fanlore.org>), and the peer reviewed journal *Transformative Works and Cultures* (<http://www.transformativeworks.org/twac/>). OTW’s main project,

¹ For example, the Fan Culture Preservation Project (<https://www.transformativeworks.org/fan-culture-preservation-project/>), a collaboration between the Organization for Transformative Works and the University of Iowa Libraries Special Collections, comprises multiple collections including zines, vids, and convention materials.

allotted over 70% of their annual budget, is the fanwork repository Archive of Our Own (Del Cima 2016; Burgess 2017a, 2017b, 2018a, 2018b).

As a self-described archive created and maintained by community volunteers, Archive of Our Own (hereafter, AO3 or the Archive) is a digital community archive. At almost 2 million registered users in over 30,000 recognized fandoms, its community is large and in some ways diverse; however, it does not fully represent the diversity of the online fan community. In 2013, when the Archive marked its 200,000-account milestone, Tumblr user centrumlumnia published the results of a census of AO3 users that revealed telling areas of homogeneity: 76% of the 10,000 respondents identified as White, and almost 95% used the site to read fiction in English. (centeroftheselights 2013). In addition to census-level demographics, there are a number of smaller subcommunities that make up fandom as a whole and AO3's usership in particular. The Archive's structure and design reflects feedback from the community and thus embodies tensions between and among different groups of users.

This report examines these tensions among community members and the way they have shaped Archive policy or functionality, particularly with regards to metadata, access, preservation, authorial control, collection development, and other areas relevant to an information science perspective.

The remainder of this introduction will provide an overview of AO3's major conflict areas, followed by a description of the Archive's tagging system, which represents a significant attempt to mitigate these conflicts. After that, a brief methods section will describe the data collection that enabled this research. The report is divided

into three sections based on the tensions outlined below and is followed by a glossary of fannish terminology drawn from OTW's Fanlore wiki as well as personal experience and knowledge.

The conflicts that shape the body of this report are divided into broad categories based on the user groups involved. I identify three tensions:

1. *Tensions between fandoms* refers to differences between fans of different source materials. These differences tend to reflect how different fandoms are represented on the Archive in terms of metadata and ease of access, as well as how responsive Archive personnel are to their unique needs. Complaints are typically framed as comparisons to how well the Archive has addressed similar issues in other fandoms.
2. *Tensions between creators* reflects issues of what constitutes fanwork, what types of work are worth preserving, and the frustration that creators of non-textual works feel regarding the Archive's inability to host their creations. This conflict has shaped the Archive's "collection development policy" (that is, what types of works are allowed per its Terms of Service).
3. *Tensions between creators and consumers* is perhaps the broadest of these categories and as such will be addressed last. Its many facets involve cases in which the author's creative control is set against the efficacy of the Archive's information retrieval mechanisms, and also touch on questions of what types of fanwork are worthy of preservation.

The Archive does not simply rely on generalized information science theories relating to information seeking behavior, search and retrieval, or archival practice to address these tensions and the practices that result from addressing them. As a community archive, AO3 has a responsibility to the community it represents, to describe their documents in terms that are “meaningful and appropriate” to them (Wakimoto, Bruce and Partridge, 2013). In fact, AO3 actively supports creators’ right to describe their own work any way they want (Archive of Our Own, 2012e, n.d.-a, n.d.-b), a decision that is sometimes seen to be at odds with the Archive’s goal of providing access and its responsibility to content consumers. Finding a balance between access and the idiosyncratic (sometimes even intentionally obtuse) descriptive practices that have developed in online fan communities has led to the unique tagging system the Archive employs.

The conflicts identified in my research represent a dialog between overlapping groups of Archive users and volunteers. Compromises between different groups, and the Archive’s own values, have enjoyed varying degrees of success. Regardless, the flexibility and openness to experimentation demonstrated in these attempts serves as a model for working respectfully with community archiving ventures with unique information needs.

Tagging on the Archive

One of the most innovative ways AO3 has integrated community practices into an effective information system is through its tag-based metadata schema. Most of the visible metadata applied to Archive works appears in the form of tags chosen by the creator of a work. Metadata entered as tags can be browsed as well as searched, and includes ratings, warnings, characters, fandoms, and relationships. Metadata that appears outside of a work's tags, and can therefore be searched but not browsed, includes language, word-count, completion status, publication date, and the number of hits, comments, and kudos (likes).

Tags in the Archive fall into seven broad categories as shown in Figure 1. *Rating* indicates the work's intended audience; *Archive Warnings* inform the user about possible objectionable content; *Fandoms* indicate the source material(s) on which the work is based; *Category* indicates the types of interpersonal relationships featured in the story; *Relationships* use pairs (or triples, or quadruples, etc.) of characters to indicate the specific relationships present in the work; and *Characters* lists individuals featured in the work, whether part of a relationship or not. The final category, *Additional Tags*, can contain anything else the creator wishes to add. Gursoy, Wickett and Feinberg (2018) offer a typology of the different forms these tags may take.

Post New Work

[Restore From Last Unposted Draft?](#)

[Import From An Existing URL Instead?](#)

* Required information

Tags

Tags are comma separated, 100 characters per tag.

Rating* ?

Not Rated

Archive Warnings* ?

☐ Choose Not To Use Archive Warnings
☐ Graphic Depictions Of Violence
☐ Major Character Death
☐ No Archive Warnings Apply
☐ Rape/Non-Con
☐ Underage

Fandoms* ?

If this is the first work for a fandom, it may not show up in the fandoms page for a day or two.

Category ?

☐ F/F
☐ F/M
☐ Gen
☐ M/M
☐ Multi
☐ Other

Relationships ?

Characters ?

Additional Tags ?


Figure 1. Tag categories on Archive of Our Own.

Of the seven tag categories, only three – Rating, Archive Warnings, and Category – use a controlled vocabulary. The other four employ the unique mix of controlled vocabulary and folksonomy that is one of AO3’s distinguishing features. The Fandoms, Relationships, Characters, and Additional Tags categories all allow for text entry. Suggestions are generated based on the text entered (Figure 2) but creators are not required to use them: AO3 permits the use of any tags, up to 100 characters in length, in any of the four text-entry tag categories. When a tag is entered for the first time, it is reviewed by a team of volunteers, who may “wrangle” the tag, by manually linking it to synonyms, and place it in a hierarchy of meta tags, subtags, parent tags, and child tags

(Figure 3). These hierarchies are described by the Archive Wrangling Guidelines (Tag Wrangling Committee, n.d.).

Figure 2. Tag suggestions based on text entered in the Additional Tags category.

Figure 3. (below) The tag page for Howard Stark's A+ Parenting, showing synonyms and hierarchy.



Howard Stark's A+ Parenting

[Works](#)
[Bookmarks](#)

This tag belongs to the Additional Tags Category. It's a common tag. You can use it to [filter works](#) and to [filter bookmarks](#).

Parent tags (more general):

[Marvel Cinematic Universe](#)

Tags with the same meaning:

[a round of applause for Howard Starks A+ parenting](#), [Howard Stark A+ parenting](#), [Howard Stark's questionable parenting](#), [Howard Starks A+ Parenting](#), [Howard Stark's A+ Parenting](#), [Howard's A+ Parenting](#), [Howard's stellar parenting](#), [Howards A+ Parenting](#), [Howards A+++ parenting](#), [Howards A+++parenting](#), [Howard's A+ Parenting](#), [mentions of Howard Stark's A+ parenting](#), [References to Howard Stark's A+ Parenting](#), [There's a reason for Howard Stark's A++ parenting](#)

Sub tags:

[Howard Stark's Bad Parenting](#)

In addition to linking fan-created tags into a functional hierarchy, tag wrangling volunteers are also responsible for forming the “preferred” version of a tag—called a canonical or common tag—to which a wide variety of fan tags may be linked. In Figure 3 above, this preferred form of the tag is displayed in the top right; under the box “Tags with the same meaning” are listed its synonyms. Canonical tags will appear as autocomplete suggestions when creators enter metadata for their works, but creators are not required to use these preferred forms. Each synonym in Figure 3 is a tag that a creator has used to describe their work, and which has been reviewed by a volunteer who determined it had the same meaning as the canonical “Howard Stark’s A+ Parenting.” Now if someone decides to tag their work “a round of applause for Howard Starks A+ parenting,” for example, it will appear when a user browses, searches, or filters for the canonical tag “Howard Stark’s A+ Parenting,” because it has been marked as a synonym of this tag. The examples in Figure 3 are brief and straightforward compared to many other tags, such as the example in Figure 6 below.

Fandom, character, and relationship tags may have hundreds of synonyms (see Figure 6), especially if their source media is not in English. Additionally, some tags may never be marked common or made synonyms of common tags. This is usually the case for conversational tags in the Additional Tags category, such as “dont feed your lizard keys or gift cards this is extremely unrealistic” or “all you need to know is that this story is one of my favorite things I've ever done.” The use of tags like these, which cannot be

and are not meant to be used as access points, feeds some of the tension between content creators and consumers on the site. In the next section I describe the methods used to investigate the tagging culture and user interests on AO3.

Methods

Data collection for this project was originally intended to have taken the form of a series of interviews with members of the OTW's Open Doors committee and special collections archivists at the University of Iowa Libraries.² Due to scheduling conflicts, however, these interviews were prohibited and my research investigation shifted to a review of primary and secondary materials including social media posts about AO3 and entries from the Archive's own news blog. I collected sources related to developments in AO3's structure and policy during the ongoing experiment of its open beta stage, with special focus on metadata, information retrieval mechanisms, and preservation. These records were coded using grounded theory and the patterns of conflict outlined in the introduction above emerged (Faggiolani, 2011). Most data were collected from posts and comments archived in AO3's news blog, though some came from other public sources such as Tumblr and LiveJournal. All were publicly available on the World Wide Web at the time of data collection.

The majority of people quoted in this report were writing under online usernames that cannot (because of AO3's privacy policy) and should not be linked to real world identities (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-a; Bruckman, Luther and Fiesler, 2015). AO3 allows users to capitalize their screen names however they wish, but the Archive software does not distinguish between upper- and lower-case letters for the purposes of determining if a

² The Open Doors Project (<http://opendoors.transformativeworks.org/>) rescues fanworks from online archives that are at risk of becoming inaccessible.

username is unique. For this reason and to improve legibility, usernames are capitalized in the text of this report, but kept in their original form in citations.

Tensions between fandoms

Criticisms about the OTW privileging certain fandoms over others are illustrated by comments on a 2015 news post advertising the Organization’s October membership drive. The post, “Fandom is Ageless,” presents a timeline of fandoms using staff members’ personal anecdotes of their early memories as fans of *Sherlock Holmes*, *Doctor Who*, *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, and the Muppets. A guest user writing under the name Sakura observes that only “western fandoms” are represented on this list, and user Taichara (2015) expands: “No anime. No manga. No animation of any stripe, actually, and no comics of any stripe. No video games. And the list can go on.” These comments and the threads that follow them are broad criticisms of the OTW’s execution of its mission; however, they also underlie concrete decisions about access points such as tags and browsing categories.

All canonical tags can be used to browse works on AO3, but Fandom tags have added functionality. The Archive maintains a landing page (shown in Figure 4 below) where users can access lists of fandoms by media category (such as *Books & Literature*, *Theater*, or *Celebrities & Real People*)³. In 2012, AO3 created a Category Change Workgroup to reevaluate these top-level media categories and began soliciting feedback from users about the change (Archive of Our Own, 2012d). A 2013 FAQ about the Category Change identifies clear goals—the categories should be easy to use across every media type and fandom and should be feasible both at the time of implementation and

³ <https://archiveofourown.org/media>

into the future as the number of canonical fandoms grows (Archive of Our Own, 2013b). The post announcing the final draft of the new media categories (which were ultimately never implemented), adds that “the system should be translatable, not only words-wise, but culture-wise” (Archive of Our Own, 2014). This last stipulation supports the Archive’s 2013 roadmap goal of making the site available in “any language” by the time it leaves open beta (Archive of Our Own, 2013a).

Fandoms

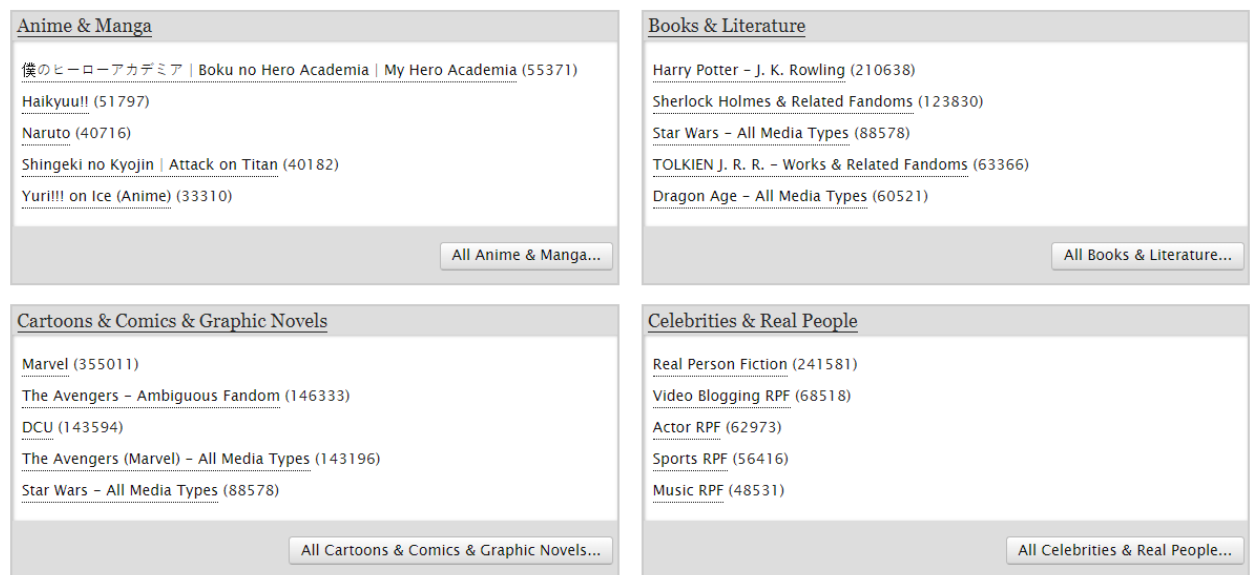


Figure 4. AO3’s fandoms landing page. Each box contains canonical Fandom tags under the top-level category they are sorted into.

As noted in the original news post announcing the Workgroup, “[t]he most heatedly contested categories are ‘Anime & Manga’ and ‘Cartoons & Comics & Graphic Novels’” (Archive of Our Own, 2014). Much of the argument concerned whether to maintain *Anime & Manga* as a separate top-level category or to fold it under *Cartoons &*

Comics & Graphic Novels. Alternatively, some users suggested separating Animation and Comics into two distinct categories, with anime under the former and manga sorted to the latter. Those in favor of these changes noted that “anime” and “manga” are, respectively, just Japanese words meaning “animation” and “comics.” Furthermore, other East Asian animation and comics (such as Korean *manhwa* or Chinese *manhua*) were arbitrarily sorted into the *Anime & Manga* category, while their Western equivalents (such as French *bandes dessinées*) tended to be filed under *Cartoons & Comics & Graphic Novels*.

Members of the anime and manga fandoms—two groups with so much overlap they are often referred to collectively as the animanga fandom—pushed back against these suggestions, especially the idea that anime and manga be divided under separate top-level categories. Although anime and manga represent different media, anime series are frequently adapted from a manga and “[i]n most cases, while there may be minor differences between anime and manga versions, adaptations are so similar in storyline as to be interchangeable.” More to the point, AO3 user Wednesdaysky (2013) observes later in the same comment, “[t]he custom in anime/manga is that fans rarely specify which medium they’re writing for”

To members of the animanga fandom, the anime and manga genres may in fact appear more similar to one another than to their equivalents in Western sequential art, a fact which is reflected in user feedback on the Category Change and AO3’s subsequent decision to keep *Anime & Manga* as a distinct category in the final draft of the proposed new media categories. The terms anime and manga have come, in English-speaking

fandom, to signify genres of animation and graphic novel distinguished not only by country of origin but also their distinctive style, exemplified by popular franchises like Pokémon and Sailor Moon. More importantly, the fandom itself evolved separately from Western media fandom and contains its own conventions and terms. AO3 user Undomielregina (2013) expounds on this phenomenon in comments on a post soliciting feedback for the Category Change:

It's actually really interesting to look at English-language A[nime]&M[anga] fandom, because so much of how different parts function is the result of persistent ghettoization from established fandom structures. In a lot of ways, it parallels the formation of Western Media Fandom a decade or so earlier, with the result that the norms can be really different.

About the possibility of separating anime from manga, or putting either under a more general top-level category such as *Animation*, Undomielregina makes the salient claim that “that kind of radical departure in archive structure is likely to be at least as disorienting/confusing as walking into a library that uses LC classification for the first time after only having seen Dewey.” Not only would such a change make the site more difficult for members of the animanga fandom to browse, eliminating *Anime & Manga* as a discrete category could in the long run cause the animanga subculture to erode and be subsumed into the broader fandom community. While this would make for a more logical hierarchy, it would be at the cost of nuance and context. A more likely outcome, however, would be an exodus of the community from AO3 to animanga-specific archives

with different metadata standards. Keeping *Anime & Manga* as a distinct browsing category represents a compromise designed to keep fannish works under one roof, even if they must be cordoned off into discrete “sections” of the Archive.

Anime & Manga remains at the time of writing a top-level category alongside *Cartoons & Comics & Graphic Novels*, and continues to house other East Asian comics and animation. While this conforms to conventions established on other sites—including the most popular fanfiction repository, FanFiction.Net—it is likely to make the Archive difficult to translate as OTW strives to meet its roadmap goals. In the face of such setbacks, it may be useful for the Archive to reconsider whether the goal of neutral, easily translatable language is compatible with the goal of respecting community traditions.

Tensions between creators

While the Category Change Workshop was busy drafting their first proposal to change the way content could be browsed on AO3, the OTW announced a controversial change to allow new types of content on the Archive. In February 2013 it was announced that the OTW Board had voted to allow “meta” (a fannish term for discussion, essays, or meta-analysis) on the Archive, with a Content Policy workgroup deciding what would fall in this category (Archive of Our Own, 2013d). Immediate responses were mixed, with many users expressing concern that the decision was reached without input from the community. A month later, nonetheless, a draft of the new content policy was posted in FAQ format for feedback, using the new term “fandom nonfiction” in place of the traditional “meta” (Archive of Our Own, 2013c). This draft addressed what would and would not be allowed on the Archive, but discussion in the comments of both posts was concerned with bigger questions: What is a fanwork? What belongs on the Archive? When working with limited resources, what deserves to be saved?

Arguments against the inclusion of meta tended to fall into three basic categories: (1) readers concerned about distinguishing meta from fiction; (2) creators of non-textual fanworks, such as art and video, who felt the Archive was privileging text-based works; and (3) users who felt that meta did not require active preservation because it does not face the same legal challenges as fanfiction. One comment thread that touches on all three issues started with a comment by Archive user Shinetheway (2013a) on the policy draft. “No one (that I know of) has ever been TOSsed [held in violation of the Terms of

Service] because of fandom nonfiction,” the thread begins, going on to claim that the inclusion of nonfiction would take resources away from fanworks that do need the Archive to survive: “[y]ou’re going to be completely revamping the site in order to offer a service that many people can and do get on their own for free at D[ream]W[idth] or L[ive]J[ournal] or Tumblr.” It is worth noting that of the three sites mentioned, two have experienced massive content purges that affected fandom—LiveJournal in 2007 (Berkowitz 2007) and Tumblr much more recently at the end of 2018 (Valens 2018). The LiveJournal purges are often cited as a major factor in the establishment of OTW and AO3. Tumblr’s policy change prompted many users to move content to AO3, including nonfiction works such as the user census data collected by Centrumlumnia (centrumlumnia 2018).

In a reply to Shinetheway’s original comment, an anonymous guest user expands upon the sentiment that it is not worth “direct[ing] sparse volunteer hours and resources to re-coding the archive and re-writing the policies to accommodate [sic] nonfiction when making ao3 the multimedia archive for transformative works it was always supposed to be is still not even close to being tackled” (anon 2013). User Lydia (2013a) notes in response that “the re-coding that would be required to make the inclusion of meta even remotely feasible (namely, a mandatory work-type designation) is also necessary to make multimedia usable.” Indeed, AO3’s 2013 Roadmap included the reworking of existing code to prepare for multimedia hosting as a goal to be met during Version 0.9 of the Archive (Archive of Our Own, 2013a). At the time of writing, the content policy change to include meta has been adopted, but the Archive is still unable to host multimedia

works, with very few exceptions. However, the Archive has also not been upgraded out of Version 0.9. AO3 entered Version 0.9 in September 2012 with the release of version 0.9.0 (Archive of Our Own, 2012d); the most recent upgrade, released February 2019, brought the Archive software to version 0.9.237 (Archive of Our Own, 2019).

AO3's slowness to incorporate non-textual works into its structure has been seen by some fan creators as a sign that the OTW actively privileges the written word over other types of fanworks. For many of these creators, the addition of meta before multimedia works confirmed this belief. Another anonymous guest user, writing under the name "A. Nnoyed" (2013), expresses this sentiment later in Shinetheway's thread: "[p]olishing the text-based side of the archive to perfection before even *starting to discuss the requirements for other works* ... shows a clear bias in favor of text-based work to me."

These types of criticisms often resurface during OTW's biannual fundraiser, and AO3's response often centers their reliance on volunteer labor. The reluctance to bring outsiders into AO3, even as hired professionals, echoes other communities' wariness of giving trained archivists control over their records. Cook (2012) describes this sentiment as an unwillingness to cede power to groups who historically oppressed the community, or who might compromise the "identity provenance" of records that define and are defined by their unique culture. In a thread on a May 2015 fundraiser post, a guest user writing under the name ":/ " (2015) explains why the volunteer excuse is, however, unacceptable to many fan creators:

When you inquire about development you just get really weird info, like that the servers just can't handle serving more than 50 GB of text. There's, what, a few hundred thousand [sic] in the bank now and we just recently got new servers and they still just ~can't handle the few hundred kb max of an image file? ... Basically either the archive is run by people who don't remember what strikethrough [the LiveJournal purge] was about and who don't understand the concepts of hosting and preservation or people are actively trying to get the cookie and have the weird idea that being completely disingenious [sic] is somehow nicer than just calling their fic[tion] archive a fic[tion] archive

It should be noted that the Archive does in fact allow image hosting in limited circumstances for the purposes of preservation. The OTW project Open Doors, which seeks out and works to preserve fan fiction websites that are at risk of becoming inaccessible, hosts rescued artwork on AO3 (Open_Doors 2014). Nevertheless, as multimedia features—such as large-scale image hosting or the dark archive and torrenting site listed on the OTW's Fan Video Roadmap (Organization for Transformative Works, n.d.-a)—remain “a long way away” (Archive of Our Own, 2018), it is fair to say that OTW privileges written fanworks if not in theory, then in practice by virtue of AO3's limitations and structure. The introduction of meta to the Archive highlighted this for many creators, but it also brought to light disagreements about what types of written text should be allowed and preserved.

While AO3 has come to be known as a fanfiction archive, the 2013 inclusion of meta was not the first time it expanded outside its bounds in a controversial way. In 2010,

OTW made a similar call for feedback concerning the possibility of permitting original fiction to be archived on AO3. This post has since been deleted but a follow-up survives, and a broken link to the original post can be found at <https://lian.dreamwidth.org/137813.html?format=light> (Organization for Transformative Works, 2010). It addressed questions of what constitutes a fanwork in line with the OTW's mission, specifically "works which aren't clearly transformative works, but which are considered part of the fannish experience by some fans." As with many Archive policies, the argument ultimately boiled down to authorial control. The FAQ for AO3's Terms of Service contains a lengthy section answering the question of whether creators may host "original" works on the Archive (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-b). "Yes and no," the section begins, but it ends by deferring to the creator: "by posting the work to the Archive, the creator is making a statement that they believe it's a fanwork. As such, unless the work doesn't meet some other criterion, it will be allowed to remain." No additional criteria specific to this distinction are given, implying that any original work, which does not violate the Archive's general content policy, is technically permissible.

This policy obviously leaves a lot of room for abuse, but in response to concerns about non-transformative works clogging up the Archive's limited server space, OTW maintained that expanding the policy was unlikely to consume more resources than "policing fannishness"—that is, the more inflexible the Archive's definition of fanwork, the more person-hours would be required to assess the eligibility of individual works (Organization for Transformative Works, 2010). As stories in the "Original Work"

fandom category account for about 1-2% of the Archive's content⁴, it would appear that this prediction has thus far proven good.

The discussion around meta in 2013 and 2014 reopened some of the questions that AO3's policy on original fiction had smoothed over. It also raised other, more complex questions about the nature of fanwork. The "nonfiction" section of the TOS FAQ is longer than the section on original fiction and precedes a series of additional related questions (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-b). While definitions in the original fiction section are left deliberately loose, the category of fandom nonfiction is more strictly policed. Not only does the Archive take on a more active role in defining what is "fannish enough" to qualify, it also addresses certain practical concerns. For example, "ephemeral" nonfiction is, per the FAQ, not considered in line with AO3's preservation mission. This of course requires the Archive to provide guidelines separating "ephemeral" nonfiction from permissible content. These semantics are a contentious topic in discussions surrounding the inclusion of fandom nonfiction.

In a short comment thread responding to a post introducing the Archive's second draft of the revised content policy (Archive of Our Own, 2013e), users on opposite sides of the meta debate profess similar concerns over AO3's guidelines for ephemera. The post's links to proposed TOS and FAQ changes are broken, but the first draft (Archive of Our Own, 2013c) defines ephemeral content in the following way:

⁴ As of March 2019 AO3 hosts over 4.5 million works total (<https://archiveofourown.org/>), with just over 55,000 in the Original Work fandom (<https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Original%20Work/works>)

Please use your best judgment; our general policy is to defer to creators in cases of doubt. However, episode reactions of the type ‘OMG SAM’S HAIR OMG OMG. DEEEEEEEEEEEAN’ are likely to be appropriate for journaling services and not for the Archive. Ephemeral content is generally meant to be read at a particular time: for example, a message about a particular challenge or a reaction meant to be read while or just after a particular episode airs.

AO3 user Shinetheway, who argues on an earlier post against archiving meta, here attacks the new rules as being beyond the Archive’s scope and capacity. “You’ve set yourselves up as the judge on fandomwide nonfiction content, in communities ... that you may have absolutely no experience in to gauge relevancy, quality, and context,” Shinetheway (2013b) accuses, describing a function the Archive took pains to absolve itself of in the 2010 post on original fiction. The comment goes on to characterize the necessary policing as a waste of the Archive’s resources and to decry the example of ephemeral nonfiction as a sexist stereotype of a “flailing incoherent teenage fangirl.”

Shinetheway’s comment concludes that the only way to exercise the type of control that the policy changes are geared toward establishing is to continue to disallow all nonfiction. However, when supporters of meta on the Archive echo some of the arguments in responding comments, they arrive at the opposite conclusion: that meta on the archive should be as unmoderated as fiction. User Pslasher notes that fictional works of comparable quality are allowed, and in fact expressly protected: “[y]ou understand,” state AO3’s Terms of Service, “that using the Archive may expose you to material that is

offensive, triggering, or badly spelled” (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-a). In the current TOS FAQ, the Archive retains the rule about ephemera but has removed the example. Instead the FAQ emphasizes that AO3 is not meant to be a personal journal or blog and attempts to separate nonfiction content that belongs on AO3 from that which belongs on the OTW’s community history wiki, Fanlore.

AO3’s policies on original fiction and fandom nonfiction, as well as its continued inability to support multimedia fanworks, represent practical compromises that separate the actual Archive from the ideal of “maximum inclusiveness” enshrined in the statement of belief at the beginning of the Terms of Service (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-a). Some users find this gap between the ideal of maximum inclusion and the reality of practical constraints to be hypocritical. The anonymous user quoted on page 18 above (:/, 2015) alluded to this when describing Archive staff as “trying to get the cookie.” The metaphor is explained earlier in the comment: “...what irks me is that basically no lcurr [no one cares] [about hosting multimedia works] but people still kind of want the inclusiveness all-the-fandom cookie?” The criticism being that the Archive wants credit for its “maximum inclusiveness” goal without doing any of the work needed to make AO3 inclusive. Another guest user, commenting under the name “Anon Reader” (2013), expresses a similar sentiment in clearer terms: “*You need to start telling people No explicitly rather than making them uncomfortable or starving them out by lack of tools*” (emphasis in original).

To these critics the Archive’s compromises do not bring their vision in line with reality; rather, they solidify the reality of the Archive farther and farther from its vision.

The gap between expectation and reality is seen in the disparity of support between text-based and multimedia works, where Archive functionality for fan fiction writers inches closer to the ideal while other media types have virtually nothing. This disparity is consistent with Anon Reader's frustration about a "lack of tools," but that is only a part of the comment's meaning. It also explicitly accuses the Archive of favoring Western fandom over the rest of the world; of favoring fandoms based on television and film over other sources; and of favoring writers over readers. This last complaint, it has already been noted, was another major criticism of the Archive's decision to host fandom nonfiction. It also appears in discussions concerning tagging practices, the Archive's search and browsing functions and semi-controlled vocabulary, and the proper extent of authorial control.

Tensions between creators and consumers

While the Archive serves largely as a place for creators to host their works, part of its mission is to make those works accessible to other fans. Creators maintain some control over this access. Works can, for instance, be restricted to logged-in users, and can be deleted at any time. AO3 also offers an “orphaning” function, which unlinks a work from its creator’s account name and attaches it to the Archive’s “Orphan Account.” This function is meant to preserve access to a work even if the creator no longer wants to be associated with it.

In addition to these and other tools for creators, the Archive provides a variety of functions intended to be used by consumers, such as the ability to save a work as a bookmark or recommendation, with optional bookmarker-assigned tags. Despite these features the Archive in its younger years battled the perception that user accounts were for creators only. Part of the reason for this is the account invitation system that the Archive has long used to control its growth and avoid overloading its servers and its code (Archive of Our Own, 2012a). When a 2011 news post about changes to the process of logging in announced consequent efforts to make it easier for logged-out users to comment on works, some feared that as an unintended result of these efforts, consumers might feel less compelled to make an Archive account (facetofcathy, 2011). A few days later, AO3 made a news post highlighting Archive features for readers. Almost two years after, when the fandom nonfiction controversy began, it brought to light shortcomings of these features. Many readers interpreted these shortcomings as disparities between the

allowances the Archive makes for creators versus the tools it offers consumers. The vast majority of these complaints centered on the functionality of tags.

In the “meta” discussion, readers who feared a sudden influx of nonfiction to the Archive were not only worried about valuable resources being taken up by lower risk fanfiction content. A much more frequently expressed concern was the lack of adequate filtering measures to exclude meta from searches. One commenter went so far as to suggest an opt-out function that would permanently exclude nonfiction content from their search results (arysteia 2013). The requested feature was likened to existing (non-permanent) search functions such as the ability to search only completed works. The difference between a nonfiction filter and existing search options that filter by completion status—or by Rating or Warning(s)—is that the Archive infrastructure is not currently set up to distinguish between fiction and nonfiction works. Rating and Warnings are required metadata fields that carry consequences when used incorrectly (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-a) and completion status is a binary state determined automatically based on non-tag fields: if the creator does not mark the work as having multiple chapters, or if the number of chapters in the work matches the total number of chapters entered by the creator, it is considered complete (see Figure 5 below).

This work has multiple chapters

Chapter 1 of

Chapter Title:

Figure 5. The default total number of chapters for a multi-chapter work is “?” but creators typically change this as soon as they are able to estimate the total chapter count.

However, the only way to mark the medium of a work is by using Additional Tags which, because of their loose regulation, can be unreliable as access points. This problem is accidentally illustrated by a 2012 news post about the diverse uses of Additional Tags, including work types such as “a crochet pattern, a short podfic [audio recording of a fanfiction], or an example of digital fan art” (Archive of Our Own, 2012e). All three examples are linked to a list of works using that tag; however the 11 works tagged with “Patterns” (<https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Patterns/works>) include one blanket pattern and ten pieces of fiction. In this case it is easy to find the one work that uses “Patterns” as a work-type tag, but that is not always the case. “Knitting,” which is nested under the same “Fiber Arts” metatag (<https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Fiber%20Arts>) as “Patterns,” has been used to tag almost 1000 works (<https://archiveofourown.org/tags/Knitting/works>), many of which are fiction.

For many commenters the “mandatory work-type designation” referenced by user Lydia (2013a) on page 10 above is the answer to this problem. This function would involve the addition of a fourth required field, with controlled vocabulary, to the New Work form pictured in Figure 1 above. AO3 representatives have acknowledged the need for such a system and even made an outline for how it might work (Archive of Our Own,

2013c). But such as system has yet to be implemented, and there are many reasons why the Archive might be reluctant to do so. Required fields with controlled vocabulary require more regulation than freeform fields, both at the outset when the vocabulary options are determined and going forward as their use is enforced. Not only would this take resources, it would put AO3 in the uncomfortable role of “gatekeepers” (Tag Wrangling Committee, 2012b). Per the Archive’s TOS FAQ, required tags are limited to clear-cut concepts that Abuse volunteers can easily judge and enforce (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-b). In response to this reasoning some users have argued that the Archive prioritize the implementation of a more robust metadata system before expanding its content policy: “[i]f mechanisms aren’t in place to handle multiple types of fanworks in a way that works for both posters and searchers,” argues user Lydia (2013b) in a comment on AO3’s original post about the inclusion of meta, “I don’t understand why multiple types of fanworks are allowed. Build the house first and then move in, it seems to me.”

Others might argue that if AO3 had resolved to perfect their metadata system before making any other changes, the Archive would in effect be trapped in a limbo of unattainable ideals. In fact, the discussion on meta, around which the calls for a mandatory work-form designation largely originated, reflects the difficulty of standardizing terms in a large and diverse community. Amid users calling for a work-type field and arguing about what its elements should be, two separate comments complain about the use of the newly coined “fandom nonfiction” in place of the fannish term “meta” (Yet another anon, 2013; Anon, 2013), a broader concept that “has come to mean ‘anything that isn’t a creative work’ for many fans” (Arduinna, 2013a).

In this case the term “fandom nonfiction” is more precise than its fannish equivalent, but in other cases employing controlled vocabulary on the Archive has led to a loss of nuance and meaning. In the context of the fandom nonfiction discussion, this loss of nuance might come from creators being forced to choose a binary classification—fiction or nonfiction—for their work, making genres like “metafiction” and “ficto-criticism” difficult to tag (cupidsbow, 2013). Another example of lost nuance is the syntax of canonical Relationship Tags. Canonical Relationship Tags put character names in alphabetical order, separated by a forward slash to indicate a romantic or sexual relationship (as in the canonical tag “James T. Kirk/Spock,” shown in Figure 6) or an ampersand to indicate a platonic relationship (“James T. Kirk & Spock”). Synonyms of the canonical tag may have the exact same meanings, as with “Kirk x Spock” or the portmanteau “Spirk.” However, other variations contain additional meaning that is lost when the tag is marked as a synonym of the canonical. “Kirk/T’Spock,” for example, indicates a female version of Spock. Tags with reversed name order, such as “Spock/James T. Kirk” indicate a different relationship dynamic.



This tag belongs to the Relationship Category. It's a common tag. You can use it to [filter works](#) and to [filter bookmarks](#).

Parent tags (more general):

[James T. Kirk](#), [Spock \(Star Trek\)](#), [Star Trek - Various Authors](#), [Star Trek: Alternate Original Series \(Movies\)](#), [Star Trek: The Animated Series](#), [Star Trek: The Original Series](#), [Star Trek: The Original Series \(Movies\)](#)

Tags with the same meaning:

[\(James T. Kirk/Spock\)](#), [\(Mentioned\) James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [. Kirk/Spock](#), [a hint of possible Spirk](#), [A little bit of Spirk](#), [A Series Of Events That Lead To Kirk/Spock](#), [A Tiny Bit of Kirk/Spock](#), [Alluded to Kirk Prime/Spock Prime](#), [And Jim/Spock](#), [Background James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Background Kirk/Spock](#), [Background Spirk - Relationship](#), [background Spock/James T. Kirk](#), [Beautiful Star Trek Spirk](#), [Best of KS Star Trek](#), [Blink If You Squint Spirk](#), [but just spirk](#), [Carlie'sJim/Gianna'sSpock](#), [Established Spirk](#), [eventual James T. Kirk/Spock - Relationship](#), [Eventual James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Explicit Jim/Spock](#), [Fav kirk/Spock fic](#), [Fem Kirk/Spock](#), [Feml James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [FemlJames T. Kirk/FemlSpock](#), [femJim/spock](#), [FemlKirk/FemlSpock](#), [FemlKirk/Spock](#), [femlspock/femlKirk](#), [female James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Female Kirk/Spock](#), [FemKirk/Spock](#), [future James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [girlJames T. Kirk/Spock](#), [girlJim/Spock](#), [GirlKirk/Spock](#), [girlSpock/Kirk](#), [girlKirk/Spock](#), [Hint of future Spock/Kirk](#), [hints at Kirk/Spock](#), [hints of K/S](#), [hints of spirk but it never actually happens](#), [Hints to Spock/Kirk](#), [implied James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [implied K/S](#), [implied Kirk/Spock](#), [Implied Spock/Jim Kirk](#), [implied spock/kirk](#), [It's frustratingJames Kirk/Spock](#), [J.T. Kirk/Spock Prime](#), [Jame T. Kirk/Spock](#), [James Kirk Jr./Spock Jr.](#), [James kirk x spock](#), [James Kirk / Spock](#), [James Kirk/Spock](#), [James T Kirk / Spock](#), [James T Kirk/Spock](#), [James T. Kirk & Spock Preslash](#), [James T. Kirk x Spock](#), [James T. Kirk / Spock](#), [James T. Kirk/ Spock ??](#), [James T. Kirk/Feml Spock](#), [James T. Kirk/Female Spock](#), [James T. Kirk/Human!Spock](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(background\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(Crack\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(e v e n t u a l l y\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(Future\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(Implied\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(implied\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(ish\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(mentioned\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(one-sided\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(past\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(Star Trek\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(TOS\)](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock if you squint](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock mentioned](#), [James T. Kirk/Spock \(暗示\)](#), [James T. Kirk|Spock](#), [James T.Kirk/ Spock](#), [James T.Kirk/Spock](#), [James Tiberius Kirk/Spock](#), [Jamie T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Jane T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Jane/Spock](#), [Jim / Spock](#), [Jim Kirk/ Spock](#), [Jim Kirk/Spock](#), [Jim Kirk/Spock preslash](#), [Jim x spock](#), [Jim/many variations of spock](#), [Jim/Spock](#), [Jim/Spock - Relationship](#), [K/S](#), [K/S fic](#), [K/S fic rec of the week](#), [K/S Love](#), [K/S pre-slash - Relationship](#), [kik/spock](#), [Kirk & Spock Bond](#), [Kirk & Spock HOT](#), [Kirk / spock](#), [Kirk / T'Spock \(femlSpock\)](#), [Kirk Prime/Spock Prime](#), [Kirk spock](#), [Kirk x Spock](#), [KirkPrime/SpockPrime](#), [Kirk&Spock Angst](#), [Kirk-Spock](#), [Kirk/girlSpock](#), [Kirk/Spock](#), [Kirk/Spock \(background\)](#), [Kirk/Spock \(Mentioned\)](#), [Kirk/Spock \(pre-slash\)](#), [Kirk/Spock \(Romantic Friendship\)](#), [Kirk/Spock \(STXI\) if you squint](#), [Pre-slash.](#), [Kirk/Spock \(TOS\)](#), [Kirk/Spock at the very](#), [Kirk/Spock endgame](#), [Kirk/Spock Favorite](#), [Kirk/Spock hints](#), [Kirk/Spock if you squint](#), [Kirk/Spock implied](#), [kirk/spock is endgame](#), [Kirk/Spock Pre-Slash - Relationship](#), [Kirk/Spock preslash](#), [Kirk/Spock Slash - Relationship](#), [Kirk/Spock.I write them as TOS](#), [Kirk/spock/kirk](#), [Kirk/Spock](#), [Kirk/T'Spock](#), [KirkPrime/SpockPrime](#), [kirkspock](#), [Kock](#), [Krik/Spock](#), [lamb: kirk/spock](#), [Light Jim/Spock](#), [Mention of Spirk](#), [Mentioned Spirk](#), [mirror!Spock/James T. Kirk](#), [Most likely some Spirk](#), [my favorite spirk fanfic ever](#), [New Jim/New Spock](#), [NulKirk/NulSpock](#), [NuSpirk and Original!Spirk](#), [one moment is sorta k/s but it's essentially gen](#), [one sided James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [one sided James T.Kirk/ Spock](#), [one sided Kirk/Spock](#), [one-sided Jim to Spock](#), [One-sided Kirk/Spock - Relationship](#), [One-Sided Spock/James T. Kirk](#), [OTP: Thyla](#), [Pairing: Kirk/Spock](#), [Pairing:James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [pairing: kirk/spock](#), [pairing:kirk/spock](#), [past james t kirk/spock](#), [past James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [past Jim Kirk/Spock](#), [Possible James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Possibly Jim/Spock](#), [Pre James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [pre Spock/femlJames T. Kirk](#), [pre spock/kirk](#), [pre-James T. Kirk/Spock - Relationship](#), [Pre-James T. Kirk/Spock - Relationship](#), [pre-Kirk/Spock](#), [pre-relationship Kirk/Spock](#), [pre-Spock/Kirk](#), [Predominantly Kirk/Spock](#), [Previous James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Rec: spirk](#), [Rec: spirk](#), [references to future Spirk](#), [references to implied Kirk/Spock if you squint](#), [side James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [skirk](#), [Slight James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Slight Kirk/Spock](#), [Space Husbands - Relationship](#), [Speculated James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Spirk \(AOS\)](#), [Spirk - Relationship](#), [spirk clásico](#), [Spirk cuteness](#), [Spirk fav.](#), [Spirk fluff fav.](#), [Spirk is endgame](#), [SPIRK!!!!](#), [Spoc/Kerk](#), [Spock / Kirk](#), [SPOCK KIRK](#), [Spock Kirk AU](#), [Spock x James](#), [Spock x James kirk](#), [Spock x James T. Kirk](#), [Spock x Jim](#), [Spock/ Jim Kirk](#), [Spock/Boy Kirk](#), [Spock/FemlKirk](#), [Spock/girlJim](#), [Spock/James Kirk](#), [Spock/James T Kirk](#), [Spock/James T. Kirk](#), [Spock/James T.Kirk](#), [Spock/Jim](#), [Spock/Jim Kirk](#), [Spock/Kirk](#), [spock/kirk](#), [Spock/Kirk - Relationship](#), [Spock/Kirk SPORK](#), [spockkirk](#), [spockXkirk - Relationship](#), [SpockxKirk](#), [spork - Relationship](#), [Sprik](#), [ST09: Jim/Spock](#), [ST09: Jim/Spock](#), [Subtle Kirk/Spock](#), [Suggested Spirk](#), [The fic that convinced me that Kirk/Spock is believable](#), [To read: Kirk/Spock](#), [TOS Spirk](#), [Unrequited - Jim Kirk/Spock](#), [Unrequited James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [VERY briefly mentioned James T. Kirk/Spock](#), [Very slightly hinted Spock/Kirk](#), [Vulcan!Spock/James T. Kirk/Human!Spock](#), [with maybe hints of Spock/Kirk?](#), [working towards kirk/spock](#), [Young Jim/Young Spock](#), [Young Spock/Admiral Kirk](#), [Young Spock/Jim](#), [Джим Кирк/ Спок](#), [K/S \(назревающий\)](#), [Кирк/Спок](#), [спирк](#), [스파커크](#), [커크스파크](#)

Figure 6. Tag page for "James T. Kirk/Spock," with synonyms listed under "Tags with the same meaning."

Preferred forms are intended to be a compromise between a controlled vocabulary allowing for effective search and retrieval and a folksonomy respecting fannish traditions. Part of that compromise is AO3's general policy of deferring to creators' descriptions of their work (Archive of Our Own, n.d.-a, n.d.-b) while their tags are linked manually and behind the scenes for the benefit of readers. However, many readers do not feel that a

balance has been struck and instead interpret the policy of deferring to creators as valuing creators over consumers. Of the various ways in which AO3's deference to creators manifests itself, the Archive's lax regulations on tagging is one of the most commonly criticized—and, as a result, also one of the most commonly defended—practices. Allowing creators freedom to tag their work anyway they like leads to problems like misspellings and tags entered in the wrong field. In the Additional Tags field in particular, it also leads to “chatty” tags that are not intended to be used in retrieval—as with the examples “dont feed your lizard keys or gift cards this is extremely unrealistic” or “all you need to know is that this story is one of my favorite things I've ever done” in the introduction above. These are often called “Tumblr tags,” in reference to the convention of adding commentary in the tags rather than the body when sharing a post on the social media site Tumblr.

In mid-2012, FanFiction.Net began to crack down on adult content, compelling many authors to move their works to AO3 and many readers to follow. The sudden increase in traffic—almost doubled from the beginning of the year—slowed the Archive nearly to a standstill (Organization for Transformative Works, 2012). In a stop-gap fix effort to get the website running, AO3 temporarily disabled its tag filters, which they likened to an “800-pound gorilla sitting on top of [their] database” (Archive of Our Own, 2012b). Later in the year, after a series of posts on tag statistics revealed how many different Additional Tags were currently in use, many users began to blame the proliferation of Tumblr tagging for the stress the filters had been putting on the site (helens78, 2012). A follow-up post addressed this misconception, explaining that “[i]t's

the popular canonical tags and metatags that put the most strain on the servers” (Tag Wrangling Committee, 2012a). A second follow-up, posted a day later, lays out the advantages and drawbacks of the Archive’s “compromise between the two standard tagging/organization models for online archives: a regulated taxonomy, versus a ‘folksonomy,’” addressing at some length concerns about the sustainability of the work-intensive, volunteer-driven wrangling system that holds the two models together (Tag Wrangling Committee, 2012b).

In response to this defense, complaints about Tumblr tagging only diversified, expanding to include usability and accessibility issues such as the difficulty of scrolling past large blocks of tags on certain devices (Max, 2012), or the visual and cognitive strain of scanning them for relevant information (Ruuger, 2012). AO3 support responded with two optional Archive skins that modify the browsing experience by automatically shortening Additional Tags to a uniform length or by hiding the field altogether. However, Additional Tags can contain important information, such as work-type or content warnings, that can be lost if those tags are altered. Readers who use skins to truncate Additional Tags lose commentary that the author could not find a place for in the summary. Although AO3 does offer the option to place notes at the beginning or end of a work, these notes do not appear in the metadata presented in search results. The freedom in tagging also allows authors to place caveats on the canonical tags they use: for example, the freeform tags “(ish),” “-ish?,” or “(...ish? idk)” might follow canonical tags like “Angst” or “Hurt/Comfort.”

A commonly requested tool that could help readers make use of Additional Tags without having to actively sort through them is the ability to blacklist certain tags. Just as some expressed interest in a permanent “opt-out” feature that would remove nonfiction results from their searches, many consumers have asked for the ability to permanently exclude works tagged with certain content. While AO3 does allow for Boolean searches within a set of search results, this extra step is inconvenient and still indirectly exposes users to content they want to avoid. “As a sexual abuse survivor,” comments an anonymous user writing as “Jenna” (2016), “asking me to constantly type -rape (and -sexual abuse, -non-con [non-consensual]) so that I can avoid stories with rape in them is gross. If I could just tick a box and move on, it would be a lot less gross.” Allowing users to blacklist certain tags would also diminish the importance of Additional Tags and reduce the loss of shortening or excluding them in search results.

Conclusion

In their study on AO3 as an example of feminist values in human-computer interaction, Fiesler, Morrison and Bruckman (2016) identify two examples of “competing values” in AO3’s community: history vs. control and inclusivity vs. safety. In their paper, the conflict between history and control is reconciled by the function of “orphaning,” which allows authors to abandon works they no longer wish to be associated with, without deleting them from the Archive altogether. The conflict between inclusivity and safety is unresolved, but is reflected in readers’ requests for a blacklisting tool.

Similar values appeared in my research, though not always conflicting along the same axes. For example, ease of access is a shared value among different fandoms represented on the Archive, but opinions differ on how to achieve that end. Members of the animanga community value “history”—keeping their subculture separated from the larger community taxonomically as it is culturally—whereas some other users value a more logical, top-down approach to the browsing function. The conflicting values caused so much argument that the proposed overhaul of the browsing categories was never realized.

For readers on the site, ease of access is a value often seen to be in conflict with AO3’s deference to authors and promotion of inclusivity. Authors’ control over tagging practices is inconvenient for some readers, who favor a stricter metadata schema. Inclusivity, on the other hand, conflicts with readers’ ability to avoid unwanted content. Both conflicts could be mitigated by a blacklisting function, which would allow readers

to filter content without compromising inclusivity or authorial control. These two values are enshrined in the Archive's Terms of Service (Archive of Our Own n.d.-a, n.d.-b.) and indirectly linked to the value of "community." Upholding the value of inclusiveness relieves AO3 volunteers of the responsibility of acting as arbiter of community values; deferring to authorial control limits oversight duties to a workload that is reasonable for community volunteers.

Despite its commitment to the value of inclusivity, AO3 has fallen short of fully supporting the diversity of the community it ostensibly represents. The conflict between inclusivity and practical restraints is a large part of the tension between creators of different types of works, with multimedia creators sometimes accusing the Archive of favoring written works and paying only lip service to other media types. The question of which written works should be archived, also a part of this conflict, represents different values of history and ideas of "collection development."

While the examples in this report are specific to AO3, the questions that underlie them—of community control, inclusivity, "the right to be silent" (Flinn, 2011)—are universal to community archives. AO3's failure to affect change in its browsing categories, for example, speaks to the power and importance of respecting a community's right to describe itself. At the same time, readers' complaints illustrate how this power favors the portion of the community producing the records. Although AO3's history is fraught with conflict, compromise, successes, and failures, many of its criticisms highlight ways in which the Archive's practical reality falls short of an idealistic vision. Inclusiveness is limited by resources, efficiency sometimes sacrificed for the authenticity

of keeping the Archive in community control, and the values espoused by AO3's documentation are not always the ones embedded in its structure and function. But the Archive's structure is not solidified. Part of the reason it has not left the open beta that it entered ten years ago is because it is still working towards its ideals. For researchers and institutional archives interested in working with marginalized or underrepresented communities, this flexibility and openness to experimentation may be a good model for interaction.

Glossary

Anime: the Japanese word for animation. As a loanword, it often refers to animated video sources created in Japan. Anime and manga fandom tend to greatly overlap, especially since many anime are close adaptations of manga stories (<https://fanlore.org/wiki/Anime>).

Animanga: a portmanteau of anime and manga, commonly used to indicate the significant overlap of the two fandoms.

Canonical tag: preferred forms of a tag used on AO3. Canonicals are created by tag wrangling volunteers, who can link them to user-generated tags according to the Wrangling Guidelines (https://archiveofourown.org/wrangling_guidelines).

Common tag: see *Canonical tag*

Fan activity: any fannish thing that fans do (<https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fanac>). Includes fanworks but also attending fan conventions, proofreading or consuming others' fanworks, writing reviews, or even just engaging in discussions about the source material.

Fandom: a community of fans or, sometimes, the source material around which a fan community forms.

Fanfiction: a work of fiction written by fans for other fans, taking a source text or a famous person as a point of departure (<https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fanfiction>). Also called fanfic or fic.

Fandom nonfiction: A term coined by Archive of Our Own to describe the forms of *meta* that would be accepted on their site. See *meta*.

Fanlore: a Wikipedia-style encyclopedia of fannish terms and history.

Fanwork: a creative work produced by one or more fans, generally intended for other fans. (<https://fanlore.org/wiki/Fanwork>) Includes fanfiction, fanart, fanvids, and meta

Fanzine: a magazine written by and for fans. (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fanzine>)

Manga: refers to Japanese comics in Western countries and is used as a synonym for "comics" in Japan itself. Manga and anime fandom tend to greatly overlap, especially since many anime are close adaptations of manga stories (<https://fanlore.org/wiki/Manga>).

Meta: a fannish term for discussion of fanworks of all kinds, fan work in relation to the source text, fanfiction characters and their motivation and psychology, fan behavior, and fandom itself (<https://fanlore.org/wiki/Meta>)

Podfic: an audio recording (podcast) of someone reading a fanfiction.

Transformative fiction: see *fan fiction*

Transformative work: see *fanwork*

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